

## ***CHAPTER 4***

### ***PLAN OF CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT***



## **TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION**

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### ***Overview***

The Town recognizes the relationship between its residential character and the adequacy of its street system. It is the preservation of that residential character, and not merely the physical capacity of the existing roadway system, that should guide future land use decisions. This chapter of the Town Plan discusses roadway, parking issues and public transportation as the basis for possible future improvements.

Virtually all of the major arteries in Darien are State highways. By their very nature, their primary function is to link other major corridors together and to serve the regional needs of the State. A secondary function is that of serving local needs. As will be noted, traffic volumes on the arteries have grown appreciably since the last Town Plan was prepared in 1995. Use of these major arteries today clearly reflects their prominence in the Town's street system. But as traffic has increased, so has the inclination of motorists to find and use alternate (local) routes to bypass "trouble spots". As a consequence, the use of certain local roadways has transformed them into the arteries of choice – both by residents and regional commuters.

The Town of Darien cannot control all traffic problems within its borders. Many problems exist due to outside factors beyond the Town's control. For example, increasing I-95 and Merritt Parkway traffic is a by-product of development activities in the adjacent towns of Stamford and Norwalk as well as development on a more regional basis.

The Town Planning & Zoning Commission recognizes that traffic and transportation is the number one concern as identified in the League of Women Voters roundtable sessions held in late 2003 and early 2004 as part of the development of this Town Plan.

Although some local improvements to the roadway network have occurred recently, such as intersection changes, signalization to improve capacity and safety, and bridge widenings undertaken by the State, no major changes have occurred since 1995.

## ***Policies***

*Recognize downtown parking needs for shoppers, employees, and commuters, while balancing the growth of the downtown business district. Continue to monitor the supply and demand for parking spaces amongst these groups.*

*Create a pedestrian-friendly downtown where people park once and walk, instead of driving from one store to another.*

*Continue to manage access to developed land while preserving the flow of traffic on the surrounding road systems (access management) as fully as possible--both on major arterials as well as on other arteries within the community.*

*Move traffic as efficiently as possible, especially along arterial and collector roads.*

*Improve intersections and sightlines where possible to minimize accident rates.*

*Support and coordinate the provision of public transportation (rail, bus, taxi). This may occur through a variety of regional planning mechanisms.*

*Achieve all of the above while preserving the residential character of the community and not compromising on safety.*

*Reduce excessive speeding and improve safety for cars, walkers and bicyclists.*

## ***Recommendations***

### **Safety and Capacity**

Consider safety and/or capacity improvements where needed. The improvements itemized herein address three basic issues - high accident occurrences; the need for improved traffic flow; and the need for improved intersection sightlines, including more attention to the enforcement of the existing rules.

Consider methods for reducing truck traffic using Tokeneke Road as a “cut-through” (see Appendix A4, page A4-7).

The Town may wish to consider the possibility of acquiring an off-street parking area close to the Darien Post Office if it becomes the only postal facility in Town.

The Parking Authority should evaluate the possibility of increasing usage of the Mechanic Street parking lot by commuters by means of pricing adjustments.

Over time, eliminate the off-street parking spaces which requiring backing into public streets within commercial areas.

Consider revising sightline requirements within the Zoning Regulations and Subdivision Regulations at new street intersections and curb cuts. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) guidelines provide a starting point for Town consideration (see page A4-26).

### **Parking Improvements**

Study and consider the relaxing of parking regulations.

Because the municipal parking lots are mostly not visible from Boston Post Road, there is a need for better signs indicating their location. On street parking needs better defined parking spaces.

#### **1. Improve Signage and Visibility of Municipal Parking Lots**

- a. There is a lack of consistency in signing – by location and format. To better provide accessibility to the existing lots, a consistent look, style and format of signage needs to be established and adhered to. The following is suggested: Directional signing to municipal parking lots should have a distinctive sign (logo) that would stand out and not become part of the urban clutter of other signs along the Boston Post Road. Existing parking signs should be removed and replaced with new signing. All municipal lots should have a sign at their primary entranceways indicating the name of the facility. Existing unsigned municipal lot parking areas need to be posted. See pages A4-30 through A4-34 for more details.

- b. Parking lot signing should be provided, in both directions, at Mansfield Avenue leading to the Mechanic Street Lot and/or the Tilley Lot, and other locations as needed.
- c. Eastbound traffic on Boston Post Road should be directed by signage to the Center Street Lots via Corbin Drive and Old Kings Highway South to Center Street.

## **2. Improve On-Street Markings/Signage**

- a. Individual parking spaces shall be clearly marked. This will increase the efficiency of on-street parking.
- b. Existing unsigned on-street parking areas need to be posted.
- c. As downtown activity increases, consider providing more municipal parking.
- d. Reallocate parking space distribution between shoppers, employees, and commuters in the most efficient manner possible. (see page A4-30)

### **Sidewalk Improvements**

- 1. Increase efforts to repair existing sidewalks, and construct new ones where needed and appropriate. (see page A4-37)
- 2. Consider placing funds in the Capital Improvement Program on an annual basis to improve, renovate, and construct sidewalks.

### **Public Transportation Improvements**

- 1. Consider the acquisition of the private Koons Lot to provide more commuter railroad parking near the Darien train station and to facilitate the coordination of all available public transportation.
- 2. Consider instituting a shuttle van service that would offer, at peak commuter hours, home-to-station service. During mid-day times, these vans could be used to transport senior citizens or others for shopping, medical or for personal trips around town. This option, including its cost ramifications, should be explored more fully.
- 3. In order to encourage the use of Connecticut Transit bus services, existing schedules and route maps should be prominently posted at bus stops, rail stations, and at other municipal facilities.
- 4. Consider regrading the steep entrance and exit from the Darien train station via the Boston Post Road in order to flatten the hill. Occasionally, buses get stuck at the entranceway due to the vertical grade and the abrupt change in grade.